

# Cherry Tree Primary School and Speech and Language Unit

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	114815
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	338453
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 June 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Patricia Davies

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	153
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Anne Bullock
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sharon Short
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 January 2007
<b>School address</b>	Holt Drive Off Mersea Road Colchester
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 12 lessons and observed seven teachers. Meetings were held with members of staff, pupils, members of the governing body and representatives from the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including safeguarding and assessment information, policies, development planning and governing body records. They also looked at a sample of pupils' work. Questionnaires submitted by pupils and staff were scrutinised, as were 38 questionnaires from parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the success of work to raise achievement in English across the school, and to lift attainment at the higher National Curriculum Levels 3 and 5
- the impact of initiatives to match work to pupils' needs and abilities, stimulate their interest and engagement, and develop their learning skills
- the extent to which pupils in the unit are quickly and successfully settled into school, so that they are well integrated and enabled to move forward in their learning
- how far the pace of development meets the school's needs for improvement, including the contribution of subject leadership and governance.

## Information about the school

Cherry Tree is smaller than many other primary schools, with a recent increase in numbers. Year groups vary a great deal in size and there is a high proportion of movement in and out of the school, affecting all classes. With the exception of Reception, classes contain pupils from more than one year group. Most pupils are from White British families.

The overall proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high. The percentage is about 60% in the current Year 6. The school has a unit with places for 20 pupils with speech and language difficulties, receiving referrals from schools in the north-east area of the local authority. All these places are currently taken and each pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The percentage of pupils in the main part of the school with a statement of special educational needs is also high. In addition to those related to specific and moderate learning difficulties, other needs represented in the school include autistic spectrum disorder and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. There is a nursery school on the site, which is not run by the school's governing body. It is, therefore, inspected separately and was not part of this inspection.

There have been changes to staff since the school's last inspection. The current headteacher joined the school in January 2008. A building programme is underway to provide the school with facilities for a nurture group and an after-school club. School awards include Healthy Schools status, Activemark and others relating to green ecology.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**3**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

## Main findings

Cherry Tree operates in complex and sometimes challenging circumstances. As a whole, it provides its pupils with a sound and caring education, resulting in satisfactory overall achievement. It has its greatest success with pupils who have statements of special educational need, placed in the unit and the main school, and with children in the Reception class, enabling these groups to make good progress. Such positive outcomes illustrate the strength of the school's pastoral support, especially in encouraging the necessary confidence, engagement and self-esteem among children at the very start of their school life, and for those pupils with high levels of difficulty to overcome. Good care and guidance also secure a clear understanding among pupils of what makes for a healthy diet, and an enjoyment of physical activity. Even where a pupil does not share the enthusiasm of others for sport, they still express an enjoyment of dance!

The significant proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, together with movement in and out of the school and small year groups, means that attainment varies from year to year. Nevertheless, there has been a gradual increase overall in national test results at Year 6 in the last three years to broadly average levels, which is replicated for those pupils without high levels of special educational need now in Year 6. A considerable focus on improving literacy skills has reaped much success in Reception and Years 1 and 2, lifting attainment in reading and writing. However, the school has yet to have the same impact in English across Years 3 to 6, and in increasing attainment at the higher levels at Years 2 and 6 in English and mathematics.

The school acknowledges that a few pupils sometimes present particularly challenging behaviour. While some anxiety about poor behaviour and its management were expressed by pupils, staff and parents in questionnaires, good behaviour during almost all lessons ensures that pupils are attentive and on task, so that learning is never less than satisfactory. At their best, and especially in the unit, classroom activities are closely matched to individual needs and work adapted to improve weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and understanding. However, such fine tuning is not yet routine. This, and other shortcomings, for example in opportunities to write at length and in marking and target setting, mean that the quality of teaching and learning is variable across Years 1 to 6. Consequently, good progress is not yet enjoyed by all pupils across the school.

The school has a very clear picture of the needs of its pupils and local community and of its priorities for improvement. The headteacher and governing body are eager to increase the pace of improvement. They are steadily putting the necessary stepping stones in place to ensure that all staff members play a full part in supporting their work. They keep a close check on the school and its outcomes and the governing body has readily taken the initiative to improve facilities and resources where needed. Leadership

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at other levels, and particularly for senior and subject management, is developing, and a reorganisation is planned for next term to increase effectiveness. Staff members are also playing a much greater role in tracking academic performance and moving learning on. These factors, and the impact of improvement to date, reflect the school's current satisfactory capacity for future improvement.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Accelerate achievement in English and mathematics, particularly in writing, at the higher National Curriculum levels, and for those with relatively lower levels of special educational needs, by:
  - providing pupils with more opportunities to write independently and at length
  - using assessment information to ensure activities are always fine tuned to pupils' particular needs and abilities
  - always promoting pupils' independent learning habits
  - ensuring time is used to the full for academic activity during lessons.
- Enhance the effectiveness of assessment in order to promote learning, by:
  - consistently setting pupils individual learning targets, which are checked and changed regularly, and linked to National Curriculum levels, especially in Years 5 and 6
  - routinely giving pupils information about how to improve their work.
- Developing responsibilities and skills at senior and subject leadership levels to fully support the headteacher and governing body in taking the school forward at a rapid pace.
- About 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****3**

Satisfactory, rather than good, overall achievement reflects inconsistency in progress across the school and between different groups of pupils. In lessons, pupils behave well and work steadily at tasks. They often show good levels of attention and enjoyment, especially when projects are something they have chosen for themselves and are, therefore, of particular relevance and interest. Inconsistency in progress across the different stages of special educational needs means that progress overall for this group is satisfactory, rather than good. Enthusiasm and involvement are strong in the two unit classes, making a significant contribution to the good progress of these pupils. Pupils with statements of need outside the unit make the same good progress because they also gain from close levels of individual attention and access to specialist input from outside agencies. Others with special educational needs do not receive the same degree of targeted support, however, and therefore make the same rate of learning as others in their class.

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The school has worked hard to lift attainment and accelerate progress, focusing particularly on English. There are clear signs that projects to improve pupils' confidence with letter sounds and to increase writing skills is having an impact lower down the school. Pupils in Year 1, for example, benefit from having had this focus while they were in Reception. However, while some pupils in Year 2 have reached the higher Level 3 in reading, the school has yet to have the same impact in writing. Improvement has also been evident at Year 6, bringing attainment overall into the broadly average range. Nevertheless, the school is well aware that it must continue to work at gaining more attainment at the higher end and keep an eye on performance in mathematics, which has been stronger than English. This priority is illustrated in a dip in attainment in mathematics this year at Year 6, although still remaining within the broadly average level.

The school is a happy place, in and out of the classroom. Pupils work together well in lessons. They readily admit to having lots of friends, or certainly one or two special and important companions. They say that poor behaviour is an occasional occurrence and relates to just a few pupils. A few indicated some anxieties about safety in their questionnaires, but most pupils behave sensibly and thoughtfully. They show a clear understanding about how, for instance, to stay safe while using the computer and know where to go if they have problems. Small jobs around the school make an important contribution to everyday life, while projects to raise money for playground equipment, the work of the school council and links with other local schools make a wider impact. All these factors, together with their academic achievements, mean that pupils are developing valuable personal and academic skills for use in later life.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>3</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	3
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>3</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

Good, and occasionally outstanding, teaching is balanced by more variable practice in Years 1 to 6. Teaching is most effective in the unit classes and consistently so. A multi-sensory approach to learning, sharply matched tasks and a lively pace are key features, drawing in even the most hard to reach pupils. In all classes, good relationships between adults and pupils give lessons a relaxed tone, leading one pupil to comment that it is alright to make mistakes because you learn from them. In the best lessons elsewhere in the school, evaluation of pupils' understanding feeds directly into planning so that gaps in learning can be tackled. Lesson plans identify tasks with an appropriate range of difficulty, but sometimes miss the mark so that those for some lower attaining pupils are too easy or too hard. Writing is prepared for thoroughly through discussion, role play and planning, but pupils are not always moved swiftly enough to the writing activity or given frequent enough opportunities to write independently for sustained periods. Other constraints on progress arise when there is slow start to lessons or time is wasted writing out headings. Where there is sometimes too much direction from adults, pupils do not develop independent learning skills. While pupils know their learning targets, practice is variable and targets are not always checked, recorded and changed often enough. Marking is strongest in English, where pupils get more developmental comment than they do in mathematics.

While some curriculum initiatives are already influencing achievement, others are at a relatively early stage of development, such as the promotion of learning skills and links between subjects. These improvements are appropriately aimed at enhancing learning in the longer term, while well-established intervention programmes tackle it in the shorter term. Additional activities, including the Forest School programme, links with local secondary schools for food technology and modern foreign languages, work with a film project and with the Royal Horticultural Society, are a strong feature of provision. Visits out and residential trips are popular with pupils, as is the teaching of sports specialists. Indeed, the wide use of expertise from outside agencies is a particularly successful feature of the school's support for pupils and has had a marked influence with some individual pupils, pastorally and academically. Importantly, where the school has seen the need for further provision, it has funded this itself. The school's care team and additional play therapy work pay testimony to this commitment. Unit staff work as a close knit team to support each other in their work. They are well trained to meet the needs of its pupils, including dealing with occasional instances of very challenging behaviour. Attendance has been increased from a low level, while also reducing persistent absence. The school recognises that attendance would benefit further from

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more frequent monitoring of trends and patterns.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and governing body provide the school with a strong steer. In addition, provision and outcomes are well served by the good leadership of the unit and Early Years Foundation Stage. Other layers of management are not yet so well developed and are, therefore, not yet able to fully support the acceleration of school improvement beyond its current satisfactory level. Nevertheless, monitoring activity has been extended to subject leaders, and staff members hold more accountability for recording assessments and tracking academic performance. A clear and accurate view of the quality of teaching has been used to enable individual members of staff to improve their practice, so that teaching is never less than satisfactory. Despite the many complexities and demands the school faces, it pursues its intention to lift achievement further with determination and resolve so that, increasingly, opportunities to do well are there equally for all pupils.

Governance is well organised and well informed. Monitoring visits to school cover a wide range of issues and result in questions and recommendations for improvements, providing both challenge and a way forward. Safeguarding arrangements are secure and regularly reviewed and updated, while the school acknowledges the scope for some further refinements. The governing body is well aware of its duty to promote community cohesion and has undertaken training. Work in this area is effective within the school and the local community, as illustrated in the degree to which the pupils in the unit are closely integrated within the school and partnerships are strong within the area, and with local agencies and schools. Links further afield and with different faith groups are growing, but are more limited, thus constraining aspects of pupils' cultural development. Liaison with parents and carers has been increased, particularly in the regeneration of the school's Friends committee, and the recent formation of a Parents' Council, in order to engage more parents and carers in the work of the school.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3



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<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>3</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

On entry to the Reception class, children's skills and experiences in the last two years have been below expectations, especially in language, literacy and some areas of mathematical development, and in knowledge and understanding of the world. The school attributes this rise from well below expectations, in part, to more opportunity for pre-school experience among its children. Good progress in all areas of learning has resulted in broadly average standards when children move on to Year 1, although there remains a wide variation in attainment at this point.

Staff are particularly successful at building children's confidence, independence and enjoyment of learning. Children move with ease from one activity to another, get themselves a drink of water, play with others or on their own, or place a marker against their name to show what task they are doing. They are encouraged by freedom of access indoors and out, interesting activities and a wide range of good quality equipment. These features are well supported by close adult supervision. Playing with Rosie the guinea pig and planting their own salad crop gives them first hand experience of the natural world. Their own gardening efforts also added enthusiasm to their sandwich making because they were using and then eating their own lettuce. The sandwiches were skilfully prepared while conversation took place about healthy eating and the need for hygiene. Most work is as equally well focused, although the learning intention of some activities set out for children to choose for themselves is not always clear. Daily word-building sessions have proved successful in extending children's early literacy skills. In addition, these sessions also promote the joy of reading, specially when books have the fun and interest of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Assessments are frequent and carefully collated. Liaison with parents and carers is encouraged right from the start and opportunities to stay with their children when they come to school in the morning seeks to maintain that contact thereafter.

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*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

About a quarter of parents and carers completed the inspection questionnaire and the very large majority of these felt that their children enjoyed school, felt they were safe and were happy overall with their child's experience of school. Some concern was expressed, however, about incidents of poor behaviour. In addition, other concerns reflected a view that the school's communication with parents and carers was not strong enough. Inspection evidence found that the school and pupils acknowledged that the behaviour of a very few pupils was occasionally very challenging, but the inspection found that the school has appropriate strategies and training for dealing with these occasions and has had some notable successes with individual pupils. It is also extending opportunities for parents and carers to be more involved in their children's education and is seeking greater support from parents. It was found to be the case that parents and carers of pupils in the unit were closely involved and parent comments included praise for the support of pupils with particular needs and difficulties.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cherry Tree Primary School and Speech and Language Unit to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 38 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 153 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	17	45	18	47	3	8	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	16	42	18	47	3	8	1	3
The school informs me about my child's progress	11	29	15	39	10	26	2	5
My child is making enough progress at this school	12	32	16	42	6	16	3	8
The teaching is good at this school	14	37	19	50	4	11	1	3
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	34	15	39	8	21	2	5
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	10	26	24	63	3	8	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	9	24	18	47	5	13	3	8
The school meets my child's particular needs	12	32	17	45	6	16	3	8
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	9	24	17	45	7	18	4	11
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	26	16	42	7	18	3	8
The school is led and managed effectively	13	34	15	39	8	21	2	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	39	16	42	3	8	3	8

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



16 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Cherry Tree Primary School and Speech and Language Unit, Colchester, CO2 0BG

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for being so willing to talk with us. We enjoyed our time with you all and this letter is to tell you what we found out. First and foremost, your school is doing the job it should. Although you told us that occasionally a few pupils do not behave well, most of you do and you work hard in lessons, so that progress is at least satisfactory. Those children in the Reception class and pupils who have particularly special learning or other needs make good progress. The staff and governors are gradually introducing improvements to help you all make the same good progress.

Here are some other important things this inspection found out

Staff take good care of you and make sure that you understand what to do to keep fit and healthy.

Governors check the school's work very carefully so that they can help it to do its best for you.

You particularly like school trips and visits, and there are many other interesting activities like school productions, learning to speak Spanish and aerobics to keep you busy and enjoy learning.

This is what the school has been asked to do to help make things even better than they are now

Ensure all of you make faster progress, especially in writing, by asking you to write more often, matching work closely to your needs, encouraging independence and using time well during lessons.

Make sure your learning targets are checked often and changed regularly, and that you have lots of information about how to improve your work in English and mathematics.

Ensure that staff members with particular responsibilities, including for different subjects, all help the school to improve as fast as it can.

With our very best wishes

Yours sincerely

Patricia Davies

Lead inspector

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